DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 151 953 EA 010 450

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TITLE Preparing Educators to Participate in the Community Response to Child Abuse and Neglect.
PUB DATE 14 Feb 78
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (62nd, Anaheim, California, February 10-15, 1978); Not available in paper copy due to light print of original document

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Abuse; Educational Resources; Elementary Secondary Education; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Neglected Children; *Prevention; *School Responsibility

ABSTRACT

Professional educational organizations such as The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) recognize the special needs of abused and neglected children and the responsibility of the entire professional community to offer services to meet these needs. CEC is presently involved in the design of a training program for educators that combines a knowledge of school systems with an identification of critical needs and available school resources. Described are the methods used to identify these needs, the array of qualified educators available to assist in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect, and essential objectives for training. (Author/MLF)

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PREPARING EDUCATORS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

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February 1978

EA 010 450

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Presented at National Association of Secondary School Principals' Convention, February 14, 1978

Preparing Educators to Participate in the
Community Response to Child Abuse and Neglect

Introduction

To date, the idea of training educators to assist in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect has largely been addressed by numerous interested professionals, most of whom represent areas of expertise other than education. The result of this, while appropriate, has not been comprehensive. In order to really train educators to understand their professional responsibility to abused and neglected children and their families as well as their legal responsibilities, programs must be designed to build on the skills of educators and recognize the unique capabilities of schools to help children.

A review of child abuse and neglect program descriptions will yield a rather limited role for educators, concentrated mainly in the area of reporting and developing school policy on reporting. A small number of programs emphasize that schools should sponsor parenting education courses. Besides being limited, the roles described for educators in the majority of demonstration or training efforts seem to be quite removed from the concept of a multidisciplinary approach to the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. A few multidisciplinary team efforts for young children include educational diagnosticians or early childhood educators, however, very few use available skilled educators in the diagnosis or treatment of older children. Correspondingly, the majority of available research concerns the young child. However, more than half the maltreated children in this country are of school age. One fourth of the total number are adolescents.

Professional educational organizations such as The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) recognize the special needs of abused and neglected children and the responsibility of the entire professional community to offer services to meet these needs. As even the newest to the field know, children's needs are not met by reporting alone. Successful community efforts, particularly those which offer assistance to children, must include educators as participatory members of community teams. Positive effects for children can be seen if educational resources are built into cooperative community efforts. This requires a knowledge and integration of these resources. CEC is presently involved in the design of a training program for educators which combines a knowledge of school systems with an identification of critical needs and available school resources.

The following sections of this paper describe the method used to identify these needs, the array of qualified educators available to assist in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect, and essential objectives for training.

Identifying Needs

Educators are now involved in child protection by virture of mandated responsibility, professional commitment and personal concern. For these reasons they want to know how to respond effectively to child abuse and neglect. Since, in many cases, school personnel are the first ones alerted to a child's physical and emotional symptoms, there is general agreement that more inservice must be made available to educators so they can act in a responsible and helpful way. In order to do this,

two questions are raised: what are the learning needs of educators related to child protection?, and how can they be identified?

So far these questions have been addressed by those who are presenting workshops and directing community child abuse and neglect programs. The goals of these efforts have primarily focused on presenting information about the social dimensions of child maltreatment, identifiers, policies, reporting procedures, and the multidisciplinary approach. This has provided an orientation with a necessary knowledge base. However, child abuse and neglect is a complex and sensitive issue that must be dealt with on several levels, both for the individual and the system. In addition, it is a problem that means the educator must take an advocacy position and interact with a family and community agencies to bring about change. To do this, the role of the school in child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention needs to be recognized and defined. These considerations suggest that new skills and approaches are required to facilitate action in the community school setting. Consequently, a comprehensive learning needs assessment becomes a necessary preliminary activity in preparing educators to participate in child protection. This type of research was done recently by CEC. Since the information collected would be used to design learning activities, a process was devised to target learning needs on three levels: (1) Knowledge (basic concepts, background information and facts). (2) Understanding/Awareness (attitudes, feelings and opinions). (3) Behavioral Skills (competencies, strategies and techniques). Learning goals were clarified by defining specific problems that emerged and by looking at the gaps between what is presently occuring and what could ideally happen through a coordinated child abuse and neglect school program.

Three data collection methods were selected for scanning what is known from the viewpoint of history, research and informed opinion.

- o A computer search of the literature was done through Educational Resources Information Center, Smithsonian Science Information Exchange, Inc., and the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect Information Clearinghouse.
- o Fifty structural interviews were recorded with significant persons throughout the U.S.
- o Training needs of educators were explored informally with individuals who sponsored or directed child abuse and neglect workshops, and school personnel involved with actual cases of abuse or neglect.

Preschool through secondary sources were represented. Added to this data were the results of previous child abuse and neglect inservice programs. Primary sources were the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) curriculum pilot project reports (1976), and published summaries of state and local educational programs particularly from Wisconsin, Maryland, Colorado, California and West Virginia.

The following statements summarize general findings.

- o Abused and neglected children are in daily contact with school personnel. Besides children 6-18, this age group is expanding as more children attend preschool or Head Start programs.
- o Teachers want to be more aware of abuse and neglect symptoms and at-risk factors.

- Schools are concerned about the residual effects of child maltreatment manifested by social, emotional, and learning problems that require special services and programming.
- Teachers are concerned about adjusting expectations both academically and behaviorally for maltreated children and would like advice and planning assistance.
- Ordinarily, teachers are not involved after reporting suspected cases of child maltreatment, and would like to have information about follow-up activities so they can relate to the child and parents in a consistent way.
- Educators are involved in child protection and want to be recognized and integrated into the community team.
- Teachers are uncomfortable when talking with children and parents about maltreatment and want to learn and practice interview techniques to facilitate communication.
- School personnel in general do not understand the roles of other community service agencies and would like to know how they can best work together.
- Educators need information on their legal responsibilities, specific indicators of abuse and neglect, and most importantly, the family dynamics of abuse and neglect.
- Educators wanted to know how to form policy and organize their own resources to respond to families and maltreated children.

- The development of school policy is critical, however, policies need to go beyond reporting and consider follow-up support to children and families.
- While many school districts have a reporting policy on the books, the majority are not comprehensive.
- School policy should support the inclusion of an educational representative on the community multidisciplinary team. The educator should be a permanent member of this team with advisory and case management responsibilities.
- All school districts have a varying number of special resource persons to support the regular classroom teacher. Many educators have the capability to work with children of all ages, in school, home, or hospital-based settings. Most importantly, many can identify the needs of parents and assist them with the development of their children.
- Parenting education is becoming more apparent in grades K-12. Children are also learning how to manage conflict, make decisions and understand their own values and attitudes.
- Parents and teachers are assuming a much more collaborative relationship which opens up avenues for helping the more isolated parents in a community.
- Training must blend background information with an opportunity to assess the role responsibilities of educators; provide an opportunity to identify existing resource personnel and programs; examine alternative routes to use these resources; and develop skills to work with children, parents and colleagues.

- Inservice training is probably an effective way to ensure understanding of a state definition, indicators of abuse and neglect in children, and most importantly, the characteristics, attitudes and behaviors of parents. Comprehensive training should include information in state requirements, local policy and local follow-through efforts.

The following chart presents eight child abuse and neglect program components which should serve as a structure to organize a detailed needs analysis. These identified learning areas follow sequentially and are presented according to levels of educator involvement. The process is based on the theory that once people know about an issue with an understanding that evokes responsibility, they will be motivated to acquire the competencies needed to act. There is also a progression that divides the first four components into an orientation phase with the second half focused on organization. This reflects the movement from "What is the nature and extent of the problem?", to "How can we do something about it?"

TABLE 1.

LEARNING NEEDS OF EDUCATORS RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Components	Knowledge	Understanding/Awareness	Behavioral Skills
The Problem and Responsibilities	- Conditions that lead to CA/N. - Identified areas and how definitions vary. - Current trends in protecting rights of families and children. - Compassion versus control approach. - A history of CA/N as a social concern and educator's involvement.	- The relationship of school and teachers to child protection and family in stress. - General and personal attitudes to CA/N. - The feelings and reactions of maltreated children and families. - Personal values regarding the punitive versus the therapeutic approach. - Personal and professional responsibilities.	
Identification	- Definitions for all CA/N areas with physical and behavioral characteristics. - Family characteristics. - Medical facts and procedures.	- Personal values concerning cultural and economic differences. - Characteristics of an initial interview as it is used by educators.	- Classroom observation method. - Interview approaches with child and parents.
Community Response Process	- State, local and school reporting policies. - The investigative, referral and case management phases as they are generally handled. - Confidentiality and child/family privacy rights. - Types of legal interventions.	- Professional roles and functions in the response process. - Reporting responsibilities and personal reactions. - Legal immunities for the reporter. - Local agency responsible for coordination.	- Reporting procedures. - Interagency role clarification. - Role conflict resolution.

TABLE 1. (CONT'D.)

LEARNING NEEDS OF EDUCATORS RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Components	Knowledge	Understanding/Awareness	Behavioral Skills
Policy Development and Review	- National and historical overview of state legislation and policy development. - Local policy. - Elements of comprehensive CA/N policy.	- How policy development and revision can occur. - How policy development interfaces with community structures.	- Defining goals and objectives. - Intragroup collaboration.
Organizing School Response	- Rationale for establishing or utilizing existing school-based teams. - Steps in the team building process. - Group task and maintenance theory.	- The difference between establishing, building and maintaining teams. - Personal feelings about working with a group.	- Decision making. - Managing group conflict. - Shared leadership.
Providing Support Services	- Organizational aspects of program development. - Concept of individualized planning. - Child and adolescent developmental stages.	- A design process for developing an individual program. - Aspects of school and family interaction appropriate for prevention and during treatment.	- Problem solving. - Behavior management. - Consultant stance - Contracting procedures
Coordinating Services	- Dimensions of total community involvement. - Multidisciplinary community team concept. - Types of representation	- Role of educator as it relates to participation level. - Organizational aspects of a community team.	- Team building. - Identifying and utilizing resources. - Program design - Task and process evaluation.
Community Outreach	- Rationale for public awareness/education program. - Organizational aspects of initiating and promoting public outreach. - Identifying primary community leadership.	- How educators can be involved in promoting community action. - Alternative community services that are available. - Implications of the advocacy role.	- Leadership styles. - Change agent roles.

The Identification and Use of Educational Resources

For the most part educators are skilled observers of children. While not all may recognize the indicators of child abuse and neglect, experience has taught them to identify children who are having problems in school. The affects of child maltreatment most certainly are visible in school. Besides having observational skills, educators are adept at creating programs to meet any number of special needs. Children who have been abused or neglected, indeed, have special needs. A highly trained, school-based cadre of general and special educators, psychologists, social workers, nurses and skilled paraprofessionals can offer expert assistance to both the abused child and his or her family. School-based teams, experienced in working with children can supplement larger community multidisciplinary teams. Spurred by the incentive to provide appropriate programs for the handicapped, thousands of school-based teams now operate efficiently throughout the country. The skills of these team members in the diagnosis of specific problems, including psychological and developmental assessment; development of individualized programs with the child's parents and teachers, and the inclusion of necessary supportive services; and, review procedures cannot be overlooked.

Given the limited number of child protective service workers, available funds, and the increased number of reported cases of child abuse and neglect, it makes sense to cooperate with those professionals skilled in working with children.

Some of the specific services currently being provided children in school include the following:

- o diagnosis and assessment,
- o the development of comprehensive individualized programs of ten cooperatively with parents,
- o support services - counseling,
  - speech and language therapy
  - behavioral management
  - special education
  - health care.

Behind each special service is a number of qualified professionals ready to help abused or neglected children.

School programs offer rich resources to an abused or neglected child. Educators, knowledgeable in many areas of child development understand children's behavior and the ill effects of a negative self-concept. By increasing the educator's awareness of the particular problems of maltreated children, existing programs designed to teach the basic skills, social skills, and physical development may be used to support these children. School-based experiences can create opportunities for positive peer interaction as well as positive experiences with adults. This, of course, can ease the abused or neglected child's feelings of isolation or inadequacy.

Educational management skills and team coordination offer a perfect match to the larger community multidisciplinary team responsible for the treatment of abuse and

neglect. Expertise in the development of individualized educational programming can provide a model as well as an extension to an individualized family treatment program. While the major focus of school-based programs are in the form of direct service to children, many schools offer both direct and indirect support to parents. Numerous early childhood programs exist which work directly with parents to assist them in understanding the development of their child and build their own skills to improve this development. Many schools offer direct counseling to parents. Others have the capability of working through parent teacher associations to offer education and support to the community.

A Continuum of Educational Services (Table 2) can be defined for abused and neglected children which stimulates collaborative community efforts and illustrates how the previously described educational resources could be used. It has been designed to parallel and complement a large-scale multidisciplinary approach while offering direct and indirect service to children and their families. The process is outlined in two main areas: primary prevention, stopping abuse or neglect before it ever happens; and secondary prevention, stopping abuse once it occurs.

The major thrust of the primary preventative approach is to offer parenting education programs in the school or community. This multifaceted method includes: the collection and dissemination of information on the potential danger of abuse and neglect; training both educators and community members how to anticipate and prevent problems; the development of school or community policy which reinforces planning; and the implementation and evaluation of programs.

TABLE 2.

CONTINUUM OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR ABUSED OR NEGLECTED CHILDREN

Major Program Area	Delivery System	Function	Resource
PRIMARY PREVENTION			
Identification	School-based information, training programs.	Recognize changes in family structure, especially as it would effect high risk situations.	
Community Involvement	Community-based information, training, policy development, action taking.	Provide education programs.	Parenting education; homemaker skills; nutrition; health care.
		Provide alternative child care programs.	Day care; health care; extended school day.
School Program (Child Centered)	School-sponsored curriculum (K-12).	Offer programs in parenting. Provide assistance to teenage parents in child care.	Child development; health care; crisis management.
SECONDARY PREVENTION			
Identification	School-based information and training programs.	Recognize abuse and neglect, understand family dynamics.	
Reporting	School-based information and training, program policy development.	State requirements and school procedures.	
Multidisciplinary (Community) Team Participation	Community-based information, training, policy development, action taking.	Maintain educational representative on community team. Help develop individualized (family) treatment program. Maintain professional communication.	
		Assist in emergency services.	Crisis nurseries; extended day programs (after school); parent self-help groups.

TABLE 2. (CONT'D.)

CONTINUUM OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR ABUSED OR NEGLECTED CHILDREN

Major Program Area	Delivery System	Function	Resource
SECONDARY PREVENTION (CONT'D.)			
School-Based Support Team (Child Centered and Family Outreach)	School-based information, training, policy development and action taking.	Involve appropriate school members in programming.	Administrator, teachers, school nurses, school social workers, psychologists, counselors, special educators.
		Use school resources.	Special educators speech and language, physical and motor development, emotional problems, learning disorders. Counseling; health care; nutrition. Diagnostic assessment. Physical development. After-school programs. Parenting education. Crisis management.
		Outreach to families.	Individual assistance in child development and family management. Participation in child's individualized program. Peer/parent counseling. Use of extended day programs. Offer school/PTA-based courses or programs: Parenting Education, Child Abuse and Neglect, Parent Effectiveness Training, Home Management Skills, Nutrition and Health Care. Referral to other community agencies.

A similar approach is recommended in the area, secondary prevention, which is, of course, mandated by state reporting laws. The delivery systems described are already a part of most school operating procedures. It is assumed that educators would participate in community teams and that school-based services would support the overall treatment process.

Cooperative planning, hopefully, will reduce the costly duplication of community services and the expense of foster or institutional placement. Because of the complexities of the problems of abuse and neglect, the traditional responsible community groups, who are overburdened with cases, focus their efforts on the needs of parents or caretakers. If we are to break the cycle of abuse, the needs of children must be met on an equal basis. Educators have the skills and resources to help.

Objectives for Training

Past experience has proven that inservice education for educators is an efficient way to increase knowledge and awareness of the complexities of child abuse and neglect, while at the same time develop skills for subsequent action taking.

Based on the previously described needs and availability of resources, it is recommended that the following areas be included in training to facilitate collaborative community-school action. At the end of a training session participants should be able to:

- Understand how their legal, professional and personal responsibilites relate to the problem of child abuse and neglect.
- Recognize the indicators of child abuse and neglect and be familiar with interview techniques to use with parents and children.

- o Understand the role of the educator in relation to the professional responsibilities and operating procedures (reporting; investigation; referral and case management) of other community agencies.
- o Develop comprehensive school policies which support community efforts.
- o Understand the potential function of the school-based team in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.
- o Identify alternative uses of existing school programs and the recognized skills of educators to provide direct support services to the child and indirect support services to the family.
- o Understand the permanent position of the educator on the community multidisciplinary team with advisory and case management responsibilities.
- o Consider options for promoting wide-scale community education, and awareness, through advocacy or direct service.

The interest on the part of the educational community in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect is high as is their willingness to work with the entire community. Successful intervention efforts can be stimulated by preparing educators to incorporate their skills and resources with the needs of children and families.